

Alternative Certification Pathways in SREB States

Summary of State Requirements

While all SREB states approve providers to implement alternative licensure programs, state strategies for approving nontraditional pathways and routes vary. Six SREB states – Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Virginia – have approved more than five alternative routes to the profession. Georgia, North Carolina and Texas have created a single alternative pathway. Georgia and Texas allow several entities to provide alternative programming, including districts, charter school networks, regional education service agencies and postsecondary institutions.

Generally, state policymakers might develop or endorse licensure routes to:

- Create state-specific licensure pathways (e.g., the Georgia Teacher Academy for Preparation and Pedagogy program or the South Carolina Program of Alternative Certification for Educators)
- Support individuals who want to pursue an advanced degree in teaching but who have no pedagogical training (Master of Arts in Teaching and university-based alternative programs)
- Serve specific groups (e.g., career switchers, military veterans, college faculty, and teacher paraprofessionals)
- Partner with national providers like Teach for America, Teachers of Tomorrow, or the American Board for the Certification of Teacher Excellence
- Allow school districts and charter schools to deliver programming to teachers with provisional licenses

Table 1 describes 10 alternative licensure routes in eight SREB states. The summaries speak to the following:

1. **Onboarding:** When candidates may begin teaching under a provisional license.
2. **Program Duration:** How long it takes to complete the certification program.
3. **Program Content:** What training candidates must complete before applying for professional certification.
4. **Job-Embedded Support:** If the state licensing agency or program requires mentoring and induction support from school or district staff.

Table 1. Examples of Alternative Certification Programs in SREB States

State	Program or Pathway	Description	Background Information
Alabama	Provisional Certificate	Applicants must have a bachelor’s degree with a GPA of 2.75 or higher and document passing scores on the basic skills assessments and the Praxis II tests. Provisional licensees take four university courses during their first two years of teaching. After three years of service, teachers may apply for professional certification.	Ala. Admin. Code 290-3-2-.06 (pp. 39-47)
	Interim Employment Certificate	Alabama also allows candidates to satisfy state certification requirements through the completion of a Master of Education program. Alternative Class A candidates teach for three years before applying for professional certification.	Ala. Admin. Code 290-3-2-.06 (pp. 58-65)
Arkansas	Arkansas Pathway to Professional Educator Licensure	APPEL is a two-year, nontraditional licensure program operated by the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. Candidates teach while completing requirements for the Standard Teaching License. The program includes intensive mentoring and job-embedded professional development.	APPEL Program Page
	Professional Provisional Teaching License	The PPTL program allows individuals with three or more years of professional experience to teach under a provisional license. Retaining the license requires the completion of at least 24 hours of pedagogical training in the first year of teaching.	PPTL Program Page
Florida	Professional Development Certification Program	Candidates may enroll in one of five alternative pathways to complete professional certification requirements. The Professional Development Certification Program combines distance learning and school support. Participating districts provide competency-based professional learning and assign candidates a support team, including a peer mentor. Candidates complete competency-based tasks that demonstrate mastery of the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices. Completing the district program enables candidates to apply for professional certification.	Professional Development Certification Program Page Florida Pathway Routes FLA. STAT. § 1012.56

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State	Program or Pathway	Description	Background Information
Georgia	Georgia Teacher Academy for Preparation and Pedagogy	GaTAPP is a competency-based, job-embedded teacher preparation program. Candidates must hold a bachelor’s degree and pass certain standardized assessments. Candidates receive support from school mentors and program coaches. Programs last between one and three years. Upon program completion, candidates receive the Induction Certificate. After three years of teaching experience, teachers qualify for a Performance-Based Professional Certificate.	GaPSC Rule 505-3-.05
Louisiana	Practitioner Teacher Program	Candidates enroll in post-baccalaureate programs offered by approved higher education institutions or private providers. By enrolling in a program and meeting minimum criteria, candidates receive a Practitioner License. After completing six semester credits, clinical experiences, and other required program activities, candidates may apply for a Level 1 Professional Certificate.	Practitioner Teacher Program Page Bulletin 746
Mississippi	Mississippi Alternate Path to Quality Teachers	Candidates enroll in a MAPQT program after meeting college GPA and standardized assessment requirements. Candidates complete a training lasting at least 90 clock hours after which the state issues a three-year Alternative Route License. Teachers may convert the alternative license to a renewable credential after completing the new teacher practicum and district mentoring program and receiving a passing rating on the district’s evaluation instrument.	Program Requirements Alternate Route Programs
North Carolina	Residency License	Residents enroll in post-baccalaureate programs offered by approved educator preparation providers. Residents receive intensive professional learning support from the program and hiring district. In the first year of employment, residents complete 10 days of professional development. Teachers who complete all program requirements, pass state-required licensure tests, and receive the provider’s recommendation may convert their residency credential to an Initial or Continuing Professional License.	NCSBE Rule LICN-001
Tennessee	Practitioner License	The state issues the Practitioner License to all new teachers, regardless of the preparation pathway. Candidates enrolled in alternative preparation programs receive the Practitioner License after meeting state content-knowledge requirements. After completing program requirements, including job-embedded professional learning, candidates may apply for a renewable Professional License.	Educator Licensure Policy 5.502 Educator License Types

Five Factors Policymakers Should Consider When Designing or Approving Alternative Certification Programs

Entrance Requirements

Most alternative certification routes require teacher candidates to affiliate with a preparation program and hold a durable employment offer from a local education agency. Some SREB states direct teacher candidates to complete teacher education institutes or professional learning activities before receiving a provisional license. State requirements could affect how many individuals enroll in alternative programs.

Program Length & Affordability

Most states require candidates to complete an alternative certification program lasting at least one year. While some programs last up to three years, the norm is one to two years. Some states require candidates to meet an experience requirement before receiving a professional certificate, even if they have completed an alternative program. The cost of programs could deter aspiring teachers from entering the profession. States could create scholarships or loan forgiveness programs to increase program affordability.

Program Requirements

Education requirements vary widely. Some programs require the completion of courses in classroom management and content-specific pedagogy. Other programs may require the completion of professional development delivered by a private provider, district leader, or third-party trainer. Also, testing requirements could affect enrollment and completion rates. Timing of assessments vary, with some state routes requiring completion of two or three assessments before beginning a program.

Level of District Support

State leaders should assess whether alternative certification programs partner with school districts to ensure that candidates receive layered support. Some states require candidates to receive intensive coaching from a mentor. As district administrators deploy support, they can work with program leaders to identify areas where curricula should be refined.

Program Evaluation

State leaders should consider how to assess program quality by evaluating the competence and effectiveness of program graduates. Similar requirements for attaining a professional certificate, regardless of preparation route, could make state reviews of programs more credible.

For More Information

If you have research questions related to educator preparation and development, please contact Megan Boren at Megan.Boren@SREB.org.